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XIII.—*Ornithological Notes from the Neighbourhood of Cape San Antonio, Buenos Ayres.* By ERNEST GIBSON, F.Z.S.

[Continued from p. 38.]

39. *CICONIA MAGUARI*, Gm. The “Cigueña” of the natives.

Very common, and not confined entirely to the swamps. It is to be found on the plains, at offal, or stalking about in search of snakes, frogs, lizards, rats and mice, locusts, and birds’ eggs—any thing and every thing, in short. Except in the pairing-season, it is solitary in its habits. To the way it soars, particularly in summer-time, I have already alluded ; I have seen probably a score at a time, all rising in spiral circles.

The young croak and clatter the two mandibles together ; but the adult is quite mute. They (the young) are quite black at birth, and only acquire the adult plumage after the lapse of six or eight months. One, which I took on the 5th October, was about the size of a domestic fowl, in down, and, with the exception of a white tail, entirely black. It soon became very tame, and used to wander all over the premises,

looking for food, or watching any work that was going on. Rats were swallowed whole ; and the way it would gulp down a pound or two of raw meat would have horrified an English housekeeper. Snakes it seized by the nape of the neck, and passed them transversely through its bill by a succession of rapid and powerful nips, repeating the operation two or three times before being satisfied that life was totally extinct. It used often to do the same thing with dry sticks (in order not to forget the way, I suppose), while on one occasion, it swallowed a piece of hard cowhide, a foot long, and consequently could not bend its neck for twenty-four hours after—till the hide softened, in fact. The story also went that “Byles, the lawyer” (as he was called), mistook the tail of one of the pet lambs for a snake, and actually had it down his throat, but was “brought up” by the body of the lamb ! Byles inspired a wholesome respect in all the dogs and cats, but was very peaceable as a rule. One of our men had played some trick on him, however ; and the result was that Byles incontinently “went for him” on every possible occasion, his long legs covering the ground like those of an Ostrich, while he produced a demoniacal row with his bill. It was amusing to see his victim dodging him all over the place, or sometimes, in desperation, turning on him with a stick ; but Byles evaded every blow by jumping eight feet into the air, coming down on the other side of his enemy, and there repeating his war dance ; while he always threatened (though these threats were never fulfilled) to make personal and pointed remarks with his formidable bill. Shortly after his capture feathers began to appear ; and the following is a description of the bird at the age of about two months :—“Tail-feathers white, remainder of plumage glossy green-black ; bill black ; legs and feet grey.” After this spots and patches of white appeared on the centre of upper mandible, head, back, and wings ; these gradually extended, till, by the end of May, the adult plumage was all acquired. Then my interest in Byles ceased, and latterly he strayed away to his native swamps.

Breeding-Notes.—*C. maguari* is another of our early-breeding birds, nesting generally about the middle of August,

though eggs may be taken as late as November or December. It is then semigregarious in its habits, and, notwithstanding that an isolated nest is of common enough occurrence, several may be found close to each other in some favourite locality. Once I found ten nests in one swamp, some of which were within ten yards of each other. The deepest fens are those chosen; and the nest is placed among the thickest and highest rushes, rarely at the edge of clear water. It is a strong construction, capable of supporting a man's weight, and is built of thick stems or sticks of a water-plant, stems of "hunco," and of different kinds of water-grasses, rising from two to three feet above the surface of the water, with a diameter at the top of about two feet. There is sometimes a hollow for the eggs; but the top is as often quite flat. The birds occasionally sit close; and I have more than once found that it tried my horse's nerves rather severely to come suddenly on a nest off which rose one of these great ungainly creatures. It is rarely difficult to find the nest; for the bird usually stands up on it on hearing any one in the vicinity, and consequently its head and neck may be seen above the rushes a hundred yards off.

Four is the largest number of eggs laid; but three is the general clutch; and the latter number are frequently hatched out. They are of a chalky, dirty-white colour, and average $3\frac{1}{40} \times 2\frac{3}{40}$, with a considerable variation.

40. PLEGADIS FALCINELLUS (L.).

Of very irregular occurrence. In December of 1875 I saw a flock of about a hundred; and during the remainder of that month a few were to be seen about the plains. On the 5th of January of the ensuing year four flocks, of about ten each, were observed flying in a northerly direction; after which, at the end of March, I saw a pair in one of the swamps. Again in December of 1877 it was generally and abundantly distributed, disappearing about the beginning of January. My last note refers to a solitary bird seen in the middle of April of the same year. The foregoing records all the appearances of this bird during the last seven years. Such a flock

as that first mentioned is rather a striking sight, perhaps more so from the rarity of the bird here.

41. *PHÆNICOPTERUS IGNIPALLIATUS*, Geoffr. & d'Orb. Flamingo.

Abundant in all our saltwater or brackish lagoons, and even occasionally to be found in freshwater swamps. The natives tell me it breeds here; but none of them have yet earned the reward I offered to be shown a nesting colony. One of these sites is said to be in the "Cañada del Malo" (Swamp of the Evil One), about five miles from here. I have seen immaturely plumaged birds, but do not remember at what season of the year.

42. *PLATALEA AJAJA*, Linn. Spoonbill.

Also abundant, but is only a summer visitor. It arrives about the beginning of September, and leaves again in April; consequently it should breed here; but, as with the last species, I have still to look forward to finding its eggs as the reward of future researches. It is generally dispersed in the district, frequenting swamps as well as saltwater lagoons, and on its first arrival appearing in flocks of from five to a hundred. In feeding it wades slowly along, while the bill is half immersed and waved rapidly from one side to the other.

43. *ARDEA EGRETTE*, Gm.

Abundant, particularly in the summer months—that is to say, if the swamps are dried up. In the winter its appearance is more irregular: in some years it is very scarce; and in others none are to be seen at all. Neither it nor the succeeding species (*A. candidissima*) affect the brackish or saltwater lagoons and creeks very much, but are generally distributed among the swamps. Though neither species is gregarious, both may be occasionally seen in company, and they nest together in colonies.

Breeding-Notes.—In November of 1873 I found a large breeding-colony of *A. egretta*, *A. candidissima*, and *Nycticorax obscurus*, in the heart of a lonely swamp. The "huncos," or rushes, were very high and thick, but had been broken down by the birds in a patch some fifty yards in diameter.

There were from three hundred to four hundred nests, as well as I could judge: of these three fourths were of *A. egretta*; and the remainder, with the exception of two or three dozen of *N. obscurus*, belonged to *A. candidissima*.

Those of the first-mentioned species were slight platforms of hunco-stems, placed on the top of the broken huncos, at a height of from two to three feet above the water, and barely a yard apart.

The nests of *A. candidissima* were built up from the water to the height of a foot or a foot and a half, with a hollow on the top for the eggs; they were very compactly put together, of small dry twigs of a water-plant. A good many were distributed among those of *A. egretta*; but the majority were close together, at one side of the colony, where the huncos were taller and less broken.

The nests of *Nycticorax obscurus* much resembled the latter in construction and material; but very few were interspersed among those of the two other species, being retired to the side opposite *A. candidissima*, on the borders of some channels of clear water; there they were placed among the high huncos, and a few yards apart from each other. I also saw three or four close to the colony of *Rostrhamus sociabilis* (mentioned at the beginning of this paper), about a hundred yards away.

The larger Egrets remained standing on their nests till I was within twenty yards of them, and lighted again when I had passed. In this position they looked much larger than when flying. The smaller Egrets first flew up onto the huncos above the nest, and then immediately took to flight, not returning, while *N. obscurus* rose and sailed away, uttering a deep *squawk, squawk*, long before one came near the nest.

At one side of the colony a nest of *Ciconia maguari*, with two full-grown young, seemed like the reigning house of the place.

It certainly was one of the finest ornithological sights I ever saw:—all around a wilderness of dark green rushes, rising above my head as I sat on horseback; the clouds of graceful snowy-white birds perched everywhere, or reflected in the water as they flew to and fro overhead; and the hundreds

of blue eggs exposed to the bright sunlight. If my horse had come down with me as I galloped home that night I should have presented the appearance of a gigantic cutlet enveloped in egg-sauce ; for I was carrying about my person two or three hundred eggs of *Cygnus nigricollis*, *Ciconia maguari*, *Chauna chavaria*, *Ardea egretta* and *A. candidissima*, *Nycticorax obscurus*, *Polyborus tharus*, *Rostrhamus sociabilis*, and *Milvago chimango*, to say nothing of Ducks', Waterhens', Coots' and other smaller birds' eggs, *ad infinitum*.

A. egretta and *A. candidissima* lay four eggs each, though the former rarely hatches out more than three. *N. obscurus* lays and hatches out three. The eggs of all three species are of the same shade of light blue. The first average $2\frac{7}{40} \times 1\frac{21}{40}$; the second $1\frac{25}{40} \times 1\frac{9}{40}$, and *N. obscurus* $2 \times 1\frac{18}{40}$. Those of the first-mentioned two species vary greatly in size ; but the averages of all three are taken from very large series of specimens.

44. ARDEA CANDIDISSIMA, Gm.

I have no record of this species being seen during the winter months of May, June, and July ; but in all other respects the notes on *A. egretta* are also applicable to *A. candidissima*. Given plenty of water in the swamps, and it is generally and abundantly distributed all through the spring, summer, and autumn. For breeding-notes, see preceding species.

45. NYCTICORAX OBSCURUS, Bp.

Resident and abundant, so long as there is water. One generally finds it perched on some rushes at the side of clear water, whence it rises with a deep *squawk* on being disturbed, and flies slowly and heavily away. For breeding-notes, see *A. egretta*.

46. ARDEA COCOI, Linn.

Also resident, and generally distributed, though not so abundant as the last species. It may be found about the saltwater lagoons, the marshes, and occasionally on the plains. As a rule, it is solitary in its habits, even a pair being rarely seen together, and is also very shy and difficult to get within gunshot-range of. The flight much resembles that of the

English Heron ; and the cry, seldom uttered, is harsh and Heron-like.

Breeding-Notes.—It nests in October or November, and that singly, not in colonies. The nest is similar to that of *Ciconia maguari*, but slighter, and is also placed in a swamp. Four is the largest number of eggs I have taken ; they are pale blue in colour, rather more pointed in the shape than those of the preceding three species, and average $2\frac{2}{40} \times 1\frac{3}{40}$.

47. ARDETTA INVOLUCRIS (Vieill.).

Not very common, though more so in some years than in others. It is quite solitary in its habits, frequenting the high and thick huncos in the deepest swamps ; there it perches on rushes, and only rises a few yards from one, to drop again after flying a very short distance. The slim body and peculiarly shaded plumage so perfectly harmonize with the rushes, that I never yet saw the bird before it was on the wing. The other day one flew up from its perch within three yards of my horse's head, but I only perceived it when it rose. The flight is hurried and weak. The cry, a feeble strident note, I have only heard from a wounded bird.

Breeding-Notes.—The nest, two of which only have come into my possession, is placed in a deep swamp, and is built up from the water, of short little pieces of dry hunco-stems ; but of its construction I am doubtful, as the descriptions given me of the two above-mentioned nests vary considerably. One was taken with four eggs, very much incubated, on the 30th November, and the other with five, on 1st October. The colour of the eggs is rather striking—a pale green, exactly like that of a young pea-pod. In size they average $1\frac{1}{3} \times 1$.

48. HARPIPRION CÆRULESCENS (Vieill.). “Bandooria.”

Is not uncommon, but very irregular in its appearances. It is generally seen in pairs, either about the swamps or at any pool in the plains. The flight is strong, and not unlike that of the Curlew ; and it has what might be called a similar cry, distinguishable at a considerable distance. It is said to be very good eating, but requires to be buried in fresh earth for twenty-four hours to rid it of the too strong smell and taste.

Breeding-Notes.—The only nest I ever saw was taken in the heart of a deep swamp, on the 9th of November, and, though the bird was not seen, I have little doubt belonged to this species. It was built of rushes and water-plants, in a similar manner to those of *Chauna chavaria*, but not so large. The three eggs (very much soiled) were of a buff or stone ground-colour, with a few small red spots, most abundant at the blunt end. Acutely pointed, and average $2\frac{28}{40} \times 1\frac{31}{40}$.

49. ARAMUS SCOLOPACEUS, Gm. “Viuda loca.”

The Spanish name, the literal translation of which is “mad widow,” is given to this bird by the natives from its sombre plumage, solitary habits, and peculiar cry. It is generally distributed through the swamps, frequenting the deeper ones by preference, and, though usually found singly, may be met with in fours and fives, or even as many as twenty. Mr. Durnford correctly describes its “heavy laborious flight, performed by slow beats of the wings, which it sometimes raises so high as nearly to meet over its back,” but might also have added that the legs hang down at an angle of 45° , giving the bird a particularly ungainly appearance, and that its flight is never prolonged. The cry, more indulged in at night than through the day, is a loud, long, melancholy wail, and, heard towards the small hours, produces an uncomfortable eerie feeling on the hearer. It might be some lost spirit of the swamps, or Nickar the soulless himself, shrieking and crying.

Breeding-Notes.—It breeds in the heart of the swamps, building its nest, of dry hunco stems, up from the water, just high enough to keep the eggs dry, and with a hollow on the top about a foot in diameter. The eggs are of a stone-coloured or buff ground, with large blotches and spots of either a faded red colour or light rufous brown, varying considerably in different specimens. The average measurement is $2\frac{16}{40} \times 1\frac{30}{40}$ (Mr. Durnford gives $2\frac{20}{40} \times 1\frac{32}{40}$). The nesting-season lasts from the beginning of August till well on into November.

50. PLEGADIS GUARAUNA (L.). “Cuervo,” or Crow.

Is resident, though not so abundant in the months of May,

June, and July. In August, particularly if the season has been rainy, large flocks come in from the S.W., and scatter themselves all through the swamps and over the low ground. These flocks vary in size from a few individuals up to a hundred; and the birds, excepting those few remaining through the winter with us, feed always together. In January and February it may be found on the plains, locusts seeming to constitute its principal food then. It is also one of the frequenters of the killing-establishment, coming in flocks for the offal. The flight is strong and rapid. The cry or note, a species of squawk, repeated two or three times.

Of its breeding-habits I know nothing, and cannot even learn if it nests here or not.

51. *VANELLUS CAYENNENSIS* (Gm.).

Called by the natives "Tero-tero," from its cry.

Very common. Generally to be met with in pairs, but in the autumn may sometimes be found in small flocks. It frequents both the plains and low or marshy grounds, feeding on worms, insects, &c. The cry is totally unlike that of the Lapwing, being a sharp *tero-tero, tero-tero*, with nothing of the Lapwing's plaintive note about it. At night the passing of any person or animal produces its utterance; and consequently the natives use it as a watchman, frequently alluding to the cry as the signal of somebody passing by, or a herd of horses or cattle stampeding. On the frontier it usually heralds a midnight Indian raid; and I remember once hearing the narrative of an attack on one of the smaller forts, in which nearly seventy Christians were killed: the narrator (one of the three or four survivors) mentioning, quite naturally, that the sentinel heard the *tero-teroing*, and it did not need the following roll of countless horse-hoofs to cause him to raise the alarm.

A friend told me of a white *V. cayennensis* he saw near Bahia Blanca; and two or three years ago I saw a specimen semialbino in its plumage. The wing-spurs, which are of a beautiful pale coral-colour, I never saw used; and they seem to be more ornamental than useful. (Iris ruby-coloured, pupil black.)

Breeding-Notes.—The breeding-season lasts from the middle of June till January or February; so that Mr. Durnford's supposition, that it has probably two, and sometimes three, broods in the season, is more than likely to be correct. Occasionally the bird will stand over the nest until one rides close up to it; but more generally both birds steal quietly away and remain at a distance, unless the intruder should pass very near the nest or stop to pick up the eggs; then they will alight within a yard of him, and with half-raised wings and angry cries express their rights of ownership. Should a flock of sheep be driven over the nest, both birds stand on guard at it, and compel the sheep to divide and pass on each side of it. Again, it is not unusual to see a sheep looking curiously at a nest of eggs, while the Tero-tero, standing within a foot of its nose, threatens and expostulates with it in the most earnest manner. I was amused lately with a similar case, when a horse stood for five minutes in front of the nest, but eventually raised its head after a long inspection of the indignant bird, and turned away; it looked so like an exemplification of the fable of the "Bull and the Frog." For *V. cayennensis* is rather a bumptious individual, and only cries "peccavi" when swift-winged *Larus cirrhocephalus* undertakes its punishment.

The nest is generally a hollow scraped in the ground, and sometimes lined with a little dry grass. The four eggs are very like those of the Lapwing in shape and colour, and average in size $1\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$.

52. HIMANTOPUS BRASILIENSIS, Brehm. "Tero Real," or "Royal Tero."

Also common, though not so abundant as *Vanellus cayennensis*. It is to be found on marshy ground, on the borders of swamps, or about any lagoon or pool. In my estimation it is a very handsome bird as regards plumage, and, notwithstanding its disproportionately long legs, rather graceful than ungainly in its gait. On the wing it is otherwise; for then it looks too large in the body, while it flies with short quick beats of the wings. The cry, especially when a flock is passing overhead,

has reminded me of a lot of fox-terriers in full chase, yelping and snapping.

Breeding-Notes.—The one or two nests I have taken were on the respective dates of 21st August and 18th October (the latter much incubated). In the former case the bird sat very close. Generally the birds both remain at a distance, agitating their wings, crouching down on the ground, and constantly uttering their cry. The nest is placed on marshy ground, or at the edge of water, and consists merely of a bed of roots and decayed grass, just high enough to keep the eggs dry. These are four in number, and very like those of *V. cayennensis*—so like as to be almost undistinguishable. The ground-colour is rather richer and darker, and the black blotches larger in my specimens; but it would be necessary to have a large series in order to be sure that this difference is really always existent. They average $1\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$.

53. *ÆGIALITIS FALKLANDICA*.

Common, except in times of drought. It affects the borders of marshes and lagoons, and with the cinnamon-coloured patch on the back of its head, and the black-barred breast, is a very noticeable and handsome little bird.

Breeding-Notes.—The latter half of August and beginning of September constitute the breeding-season. Four nests which I have taken were situated close to swamps, and were only a hollow scraped in the ground, and more or less lined with dry grass. On one occasion the sitting bird remained at a little distance watching me; but the other times it only left the nest when I was a yard from it, and hobbled away with both wings drooping as if broken, in the most natural manner possible. The full clutch is three (two of the four nests having that number). They are pointed in shape, of an olive ground-colour, with black spots (similar to the Lap-wing's, in short), and average $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$.

54. *LARUS DOMINICANUS*, Licht.

55. *LARUS MACULIPENNIS*, Licht.

56. *LARUS CIRRHOCEPHALUS*, Vieill.

My notes on the above three species, all of which are com-

mon here, are in the hands of Mr. Howard Saunders, who will doubtless make use of any thing new in them. *L. maculipennis*, I have reason to believe, breeds in the district, in company with a few pairs of *L. dominicanus*; but as yet I have been unable to discover a nesting-colony. (*L. maculipennis*, iris very dark brown; *L. cirrhocephalus*, iris yellow.)

57. *PODICEPS MAJOR*, Bodd.

Not uncommon in the spring, and is found either singly or in pairs. (Iris yellow.)

Breeding-Notes.—*P. major* breeds about the end of August, placing its nest in the thickest rushes of the swamp. The nest, built of wet water-weeds, is raised just above the level of the water; and I have twice seen the sitting bird hastily draw some weeds over the eggs before leaving them, on my approach. The clutch consists of three; and these are of the usual Grebe colour, generally much soiled and stained. They average $2\frac{6}{40} \times 1\frac{7}{40}$, the length sometimes presenting a variation of $\frac{9}{40}$, even in eggs of the same nest.

58. *PODICEPS ROLLANDI*, Quoy & Gaim.

More abundant than the last, and very generally distributed. It is to be met with, singly or in pairs, on every marsh, lagoon, or pond, and even in a cattle-well when the water is nearly flush with the surface of the ground. Both it and the preceding species are rather troublesome to shoot, diving to the flash of the gun. (Iris claret-colour, with black specks.)

Breeding-Notes.—*P. rollandi* nests during the latter half of September and beginning of October. The nest is a slight construction of water-weeds, floating on the surface of the water, and only kept stationary by the surrounding rushes. Like *P. major*, it covers the eggs before leaving them. Five is the largest clutch of eggs I have taken; they are originally of a bluish-white colour, but after some time become covered with a brown incrustation of a chalky nature. The average measurement is $1\frac{30}{40} \times 1\frac{9}{40}$; but there is a variation of $\frac{11}{40}$ in length and $\frac{7}{40}$ in breadth between my largest and smallest specimens.

59. *CHAUNA CHAVARIA*, Linn.

Called "Chaha" by the natives, after its cry.

C. chavaria is, as may well be imagined, a most striking bird, both in size and appearance; and when such is the case with one individual, the impression produced by seeing a hundred pairs together is not likely to be less. There is a large island among a network of swamps a mile from here, on which, at certain seasons of the year, I have frequently seen that number, not collected into a flock, but in pairs. I may note that it pairs for life. Of course, after the foregoing, it is unnecessary to add that it is resident and very common. The swamps and brackish lagoons constitute its haunts and feeding-grounds. On one or two occasions I have seen a bird alight in the deeper water and swim with only a very small portion of its body immersed; but it prefers to wade where the marsh is shallower. But what most excited my astonishment was to see a Chaha perched on the top of a tree twenty feet from the ground. A week after this occurrence I saw three birds in a similar position, in a small wood on the edge of one of our larger lagoons. During a long residence here, and thorough acquaintance with this species (seeing it every day, in fact), I have never witnessed more than these two cases of such a feat on the part of *C. chavaria*, and should have been utterly sceptical of the testimony of anybody else to the fact.

In the summer-time it is much addicted to soaring, and scores may be seen at a time, rising in great spiral circles till they become mere specks in the sky, and actually disappear at last. Even at this elevation the cry is distinctly audible, and has often drawn my attention to the bird as having really vanished into the blue ether.

The cry, which may be often heard at night, is frequently indulged in, and consists of the syllables *cha-ha*, uttered by the male, while the female invariably responds to it, or rather follows it up with *cha-ha-ki*, placing the accent on the last syllable. Preparatory to producing it, if on the ground, the bird draws back its head and neck slightly; and at that moment, if one is sufficiently near, the inhalation of air into the

chest may be faintly heard. The note is of great strength and volume, and is still distinguishable a couple of miles away, if the day should be calm.

The food, as far as I have been able to ascertain, is gathered from the floating duckweed and other vegetable matter of the swamps.

One has to be on one's guard against the formidable wing-spurs on laying hold of a wounded Chaha. On one such occasion, a stroke aimed at my face as I stooped to pick the bird up, was very nearly successful; the spur caught in my coat-collar, and I was almost pulled out of the saddle by the bird's weight. I have seen a young bird, as yet unable to fly, beat off and follow up a dog, striking quickly and heavily, the half-folded wings being used alternately.

The flight is slow, with long powerful sweeps of the great wings. I had almost forgotten to mention that if the hand is passed down the breast of the Chaka, pressing the plumage slightly down, a crackling sound is produced; probably from the air confined among the feathers.

Breeding-Notes.—Well might Mr. Durnford express surprise at the breeding-habits of this species. At the end of June (midwinter) he took nests with eggs; while I have frequently taken them in May, June, July, and August, and also in autumn, in the month of March. But September and October constitute the real breeding-season, when the bulk of the birds lay.

The nest is a shallow light construction, build of dry rushes with a hollow on the top for the eggs. The foundation is in the water, above the surface of which it rises only a foot or two, with a diameter of from two to three feet. Narrow swamps are generally chosen for its situation; or if in the centre of a large one, it is placed at the side of some clear water. The female sits pretty close, and on being disturbed rises silently, without the customary cry. Four is the largest number of young I have seen in one brood; but the clutch of eggs reaches as many as six. These are of a white colour, occasionally tinged with light buff, oval-shaped and smooth-shelled. They average $3\frac{16}{40} \times 2\frac{12}{40}$, with a variation of from

$3\frac{1}{40} \times 2\frac{7}{40}$ to $3\frac{25}{40} \times 2\frac{15}{40}$. There is no difference between the autumn or winter broods and the spring ones, either in the number of eggs in the clutch or in their size and colour.

The young, when hatched, are covered with an abundance of beautifully soft down, of a yellow-brown colour. Even at this age the larger wing-spurs may be felt through the down. In a very few days they leave the nest and follow the parent birds, generally remaining in the swamps or close to them; though I have a note, dated 1st February, which refers to four in down seen with the old birds at a considerable distance from water. Even when what seems to be the adult plumage is acquired, they still remain under the parent birds' care, and are as yet unable to use their wings. The nestling's note is a feeble chirp; and the cry, like the power of flight, is long in being attained.

60. RHEA AMERICANA. "Avestruz."

Is nearly extirpated in this district. There are still some on the neighbouring estancia, up towards Cape San Antonio; and we also have a few in the fastnesses of the more inaccessible rincones. My father lately gave strict orders anent the preservation of the Rhea—the "Perdiz grande," *Rhyrchotus rufescens*, Temm. (at least I believe it is this species), a few of which are also to be found in the rincones, and its congener, the "Perdiz comun," *Nothura maculosa*, Temm., the latter being fast thinned out. But in this country the enforcement of any such decree is rather difficult. I was once told by three Basques whom I found shooting Ducks on our land, that they "had the best of the argument, for they had each a gun, and I was unarmed;" and though the remark was made half in jest, and I retorted in the same spirit that, "as I was on horseback, and they on foot, I was in a position to ride round them and argue with a series of six very weighty and convincing facts, and that at a long range," yet I had just to be content with warning them against being found on the land again.

The Rhea, if run in a straight line, will draw away from almost any horse. I took up the chase on one occasion as an

Ostrich passed me, number one having run it for a league and pumped his horse. So I put on a spurt, and pressed it for another league; but that exasperating bird legged along in a leisurely manner, looking like a boy with his hands in the pockets of his grey knickerbockers, and rather increasing the distance between us than otherwise. Then number three saw us coming, and got to horse in order to join the fun; unfortunately it took a minute or two to bit his half-broken horse, and he lost the chance of turning the bird back to me. Number three was pulling up on it though, when one of those nice mud creeks intervened; the Rhea passed it in two strides, but his pursuer prudently concluded he had no particular interest in ascertaining if the mud was twenty feet deep, or only ten. The only sure method of procedure is to head the bird off, and turn it back upon one of the other pursuers, who turns it again, and so on, till ultimately it gets so confused and stupid, that a chance occurs of "bolearing" it. The weapon used in this chase, the "bolas del avestruz," consists of two lead or brass balls, attached to the extremities of a thong of hide six feet long. These are whirled and thrown, and, if the aim has been true, twist inextricably round the bird's legs.

Young Rheas are easily tamed, but are rather objectionable about a house, as they will swallow any thing that is "neither too hot nor too heavy."

On the frontier line the Rhea gives notice of the Indians being on their way in from the desert, as the Christians see flocks of birds running in all along the horizon, and know well how to interpret the sign. A body of two thousand Indians is enough to disturb the Rheas; besides they hunt them as they come sweeping in.

61. *NOTHURA MACULOSA*, Temm. "Perdiz comun," or Common Partridge.

Mr. Hudson, I find, has forestalled all my notes on this species in his paper on Patagonian birds (P. Z. S. 16th April, 1872); so I will do little more than allude to its nesting-habits.

It is still common here, though greatly reduced of late years.

Breeding-Notes.—The breeding-season lasts from the beginning of November to the end of February. The nest is placed in a tuft of grass, on the plains, and consists only of a little dry grass and a feather or two. Generally the female sits close, and, on being put up, rises without the usual alarm-note, while it does not fly far. Nine is the largest clutch of eggs I have taken; but the more general number is five or seven. They are oval in shape, very glossy, of a beautiful purple or dark claret-colour, and average $1\frac{28}{40} \times 1\frac{19}{40}$.

XIV.—*On the Birds of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Colombia.* By OSBERT SALVIN and F. DUCANE GODMAN.

(Plates IV. & V.)

[Continued from p. 125.]

PIPIRA AURICAPILLA, Licht.

Minea (2000 ft.), ♂, 15th and 18th January, 1879. "Iris chalky white." ♀, 21st January, 1879. "Iris brown."

"Found in the depth of the forest. A very noisy bird, frequenting the tops of the highest trees."

CHIROMACHÆRIS MANACUS (Linn.).

Minea (2000 ft.), ♂, 16th and 22nd January, 1879. "Iris dark brown; legs orange-red."

"Only found in the densest brushwood, and seen with difficulty. Makes a peculiar loud noise, like cracking nuts."

TITYRA PERSONATA, Jard. & Selb.

Minea (2000 ft.), ♂, 13th February, 1879. "Iris yellowish red; skin round the eyes bright Indian-red."

TITYRA ALBITORQUES, Dubus.

Valencia, ♂ ♀, 27th May, 1879. "Iris brown."

PACHYRHAMPHUS NIGER, Spix.

Santa Marta, ♂, 4th April, 1879. "Iris brown."

In the dense bush.